



HISTORY OF MODERN BANKS OF ISSUE.

CHAPTER I.

THE BEGINNINGS OF BANKING.

Credit Instruments not a Modern Invention—Early Forms of Banking in **Assyria**, Greece, and Rome—The Baked Clay Tablets of Babylonia—Survival of Banking Methods at Constantinople—Origin of the Word **Bank**—Beginnings of the Bank of Venice—The Tax Farmers and Financiers of the Middle Ages—The Prohibition of Loans at Interest and the Functions of the Jews.

' j * HE mechanism of credit dates back to the civilizations of antiquity. It was much more fully developed in Assyria and Babylon than in early Greece and Rome, and after its development in the latter countries during their periods of military and commercial ascendancy suffered a new eclipse during the interruption of communications in the Dark Ages. It was left, however, for the sixteenth century of our era to develop the bank note in something like its modern form, and for the nineteenth century to spread its use over the civilized world,

Assyria, as early as the seventh and even the ninth century before Christ, possessed a system of commercial instruments, which included promissory notes, bills of exchange, and transfer checks, not unlike the modern bank check. As this system was in operation before the use of coined money, these documents usually stipulated for the payment of a